

THE GC AND ME

STUDY SERIES

By Steve Grusendorf; edited by OMM Creative Team, May 2009

[LEADER'S GUIDE]

Pursued by Divinity

Lesson One, Study Text: **John 1:43-46**

Leader's notes: Words or phrases in **bold underlined red** in this guide are blank in participant handouts; the **thin blue text** assists the leader in guiding participants through the study. If group members are unfamiliar with the Bible, you may want to put together a document that includes the full text of the Scripture passages used in this study. Distribute this along with the handout. Be sure to also read the verses before doing the study; think through the stories to be covered, and make mental notes about ideas or themes that pop out at you and might encourage further group discussion.



JESUS IS LOOKING FOR EVERYDAY DISCIPLES TO COMPLETE HIS MISSION.

Your goal is for all group members to walk away from this study with this sentence, this study's theme, firmly implanted in their minds.

Opening

Have someone in the group read this portion of the study aloud, as well as other sections. The more you can get your group to participate, the better! Remember to ask for volunteers, since some in the group may be uncomfortable reading aloud.

Our culture is permeated with reality television. Since the concept was first introduced in the year 2000, more than 400 different reality shows have aired.

What is your favorite reality television show?

Consider this creative twist: play a clip from American Idol—make it fun! The point of this question is to break the ice, to get the group talking; don't feel the need to spend too much time here.

What's interesting about these shows is not so much the winners as it is the losers. Take American Idol for example.

More than 100,000 individuals try out for this show; when the six-month season is over, there are 99,000 losers and only one winner. Reality television may uncover hidden talent and create overnight stars, but it is also very adept at dashing dreams.

If Jesus had run His own reality show to choose His disciples, I wonder if any of them would have made the cut. I think we would do well to stop and actually ponder whom Jesus chose to change the world and carry out His mission. The truth may startle us.



Bible Study

John 1:43–46 (NIV)

We recommend the New International Version for this study, since it clearly states that Jesus sought out Philip.

“The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, ‘Follow me.’ Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’ ‘Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?’ Nathanael asked. ‘Come and see,’ said Philip.”

Background

Did you know that while Jesus had 12 disciples, He went looking only for one? John is the one gospel writer who records this picture of Jesus searching out the apostle Philip. If Jesus sought out only one of His disciples, you would think that Philip would be a pretty special guy, wouldn't you? To answer this question, let's take a deeper look at him, based on the cultural and historical background information we can take from this passage.

Galilee, the region where Philip lived, was populated by Greeks and Jews so intermingled that the only defining mark of being from the region was an individual's accent. Peter, who was from the same region, was actually called out in the courtyard of the High Priest during Jesus' trial because of his Galilean accent.

The Romans, who were in power during Jesus' lifetime, were not too fond of Galilee either. To them, the region was a hotbed of subversive activity that threatened their government. Even the Jews, many of whom lived in the region, considered it to be riddled with religious cults and sects. This is not the sort of place we would think Jesus would purposefully go in order to find the sort of man He was looking for.

Further, Philip was from the town of Bethsaida. Located on the Sea of Galilee, it was full of blue-collar families engaged in the fishing business. Jews in Jerusalem considered their own countrymen living in Bethsaida to be simple people who knew nothing about important matters. Who is Jesus likely to find in this town?



Discovery

Philip, the everyday disciple

Read John 6:5–7

1. Philip **missed** the miraculous because he focused on the practical.

Why is it that sometimes we're surprised when God chooses to act on our behalf, even when we ask in prayer?

If we are honest, we've all been surprised a time or two when we've asked God to act on our behalf—and He did. Sometimes we pray without expectancy; we don't really believe that God will actually hear our prayers. This is the point of the story with Philip in John 6. Jesus asked Philip what he should do. Instead of asking for a miracle, Philip focused on the fact that he was unable to come up with enough food on his own. As Philip learned, it wasn't about him!

Read John 12:20–22

2. Philip **hesitated** to act alone in ministry.





Do you think it is easier to do ministry with a partner? Why or why not?

Having a ministry partner can be a great thing, but sometimes it can actually hinder us from accomplishing God's mission. For instance, what if Jesus had refused to go to the cross without a friend? Philip was concerned about making a ministry mistake, so he took Andrew with him to lead the Greeks to Jesus. We have One who is more powerful than any other—the Holy Spirit. He will give us all the help we will ever need to do what God asks of us.

Read John 14:8–11

3. Philip **overlooked** the facts, even as a disciple.

Have you ever been trying to get someone to understand the point of a story you were telling, but they just weren't following you? How did it make you feel?

Few things are as frustrating as trying to explain a story and not being understood. But how often has God tried to get our attention without us catching on? Worse, how many times have we knowingly turned away from what God was trying to tell us? Thankfully, He will likely keep pursuing us until we get it.

Jesus went looking for Philip, an everyday person from an everyday place with no outstanding skills or abilities.



JESUS IS LOOKING FOR **EVERYDAY DISCIPLES** TO COMPLETE HIS MISSION.

The mission of Jesus is to communicate to everyday people around the world the good news of salvation. Why is Jesus looking for everyday people to complete His mission?

Because an everyday disciple simply points others to Jesus

Read 1 Corinthians 1:31

Have you ever had to put together a résumé? If so, you know that you need to focus on your skills to make a good impression.

Do you remember that last time you had a job interview? Studies show that you have 180 seconds—or three minutes—to make a good impression. What did you say in three minutes to convince a potential employer sitting across from you that you were the one for the job?

Paul tells us that our best asset as Christians is not our skill set, previous work experience, or even our bank account—it's God's grace. Paul takes it a step further when he says that many of us who believe in Jesus would be unable to fulfill our Christian calling, based on our skills and experiences. This means that if we were job hunting for our Christian faith, we would not measure up. Grace alone is the key to our salvation.

How does it make you feel knowing that your salvation is not based on your performance as a Christian but on the love of Jesus alone?



Why do people need to hear that salvation is based on Jesus' love and not their own merit?

How do you think people would respond to this type of message?

Because the everyday disciple can relate to the everyday person

Read John 1:45–46

It was not by mistake that Jesus sought out Philip. Jesus had a purpose and a plan when He called this man to be His disciple. The New Testament may be filled with more stories about Peter and Paul than Philip, but that doesn't mean Philip was a failure. It's no coincidence that the first thing Philip did after being called to follow Jesus was to find Nathanael. Everyday disciples excel at inviting others to "come and see" Jesus. Everyday disciples do this by displaying a life changed by God.

Why do you think Jesus chose everyday people like Philip to be His disciples and to do His work?

What is it that makes a changed life so powerful?

How can a changed life affect everyday people?



Because Christ came to seek and to save everyone who is lost

Read Luke 19:10 and Romans 3:23

The good news is that Jesus did not come to earth to find only the best and the brightest. Jesus will never say "no" to someone who comes to Him genuinely seeking a relationship. Jesus desires that everyone who is lost be found. This is what led Jesus to the cross. This is so countercultural—even today. No one talks like this, and few people believe that this is actually true. God is willing to accept anyone? It's true. Everyday disciples are the best proof that this is true.

How does it make you feel, knowing that you are living proof that Jesus came to seek and save all who were lost?

Why is it difficult for some to believe this?

How can you help those you know overcome any doubts that they have in believing that God would accept them?





Action

God is looking for everyday disciples to share the good news with the world. It starts at home. It ends when every tribe and nation has heard the name of Jesus Christ. The mission of Jesus is carried on by the Philips of this world, by the everyday individuals who have been touched by Jesus and forever changed.

It starts with you and me

So what is your story of God's grace and personal life transformation? Grab a notepad and write a synopsis of your journey. Maybe you can share the story with your group.

It starts at home

How are you sharing the good news as an everyday disciple at home, in your own neighborhood? Is there a way that the group can take a more active role in accomplishing this?

This is a great opportunity for your group to apply this study practically at a local level. Here are some suggestions:

- Before you meet with your study group, talk with your pastor about how the group can get directly involved in local outreach and evangelism.
- Ask your study group to choose a functioning ministry in your church with which to partner.
- If there is a particular group of people in need in your community, mobilize your study members to offer to meet their needs and share the gospel.

Whatever you decide, make the application personal and practical for participants.



It ends when every tribe and nation has heard the Name of Jesus Christ

Have you ever considered what part God would have you play in reaching the lost in another town or country? As a group, brainstorm some creative ways that you can support God's mission, specifically Alliance efforts, to reach every tribe and nation around the world with the love of Jesus.

This is an opportunity to mobilize your group to support world missions—to decide what your group can do to help ensure that every tribe and nation is reached with the love of Jesus. We all need to do our part.

Take some time before the study to brainstorm ways you can mobilize group participants to actively engage in Alliance missions overseas. Suggestions:

- Encourage prayer for Alliance missionaries.
- Did you know that little more than 4 percent of Alliance people give to Alliance Great Commission Ministries? Discuss supporting this cause in a nonthreatening way. Suggest also that the group check out the C&MA Web site to learn more about the powerful effects of this Kingdom giving option.